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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study of Chinese elementary school children who are recent immigrants to the United States. The purpose of the study is to investigate the adjustment process of these children in the school, in the home, and in the community. The findings are based primarily upon first hand observations, interviews, and the researchers' knowledge about the community. Contrasts are drawn between the life style of Chinese families in Chinatown and those living in Elmhurst, Queens. The financial hardship of the immigration experience is described as being particularly severe for the Chinatown residents. Family problems of Chinese Americans are also described. The issue of language problems and bilingualism in the schools is addressed. Anecdotal information is provided concerning the experiences of immigrant Chinese children in Queens and Chinatown elementary schools. Detailed experiences, based on interviews with Chinese family members, are used to illustrate specific problem areas. (GC)

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Preliminary Report

CHINESE IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

ROSE CHAO

edited by Betty Lee Sung

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Office of Child Development
Department of Health Education and Welfare

Department of Asian Studies
The City College
City University of New York

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ABSTRACT

A comparative study of elementary school level Chinese children living in and outside New York's Chinatown, who immigrated to the United States recently.

The purpose of the study is to find out the adjustment process of these children in the school, in the home, and in the community.

The findings are based primarily upon first-hand observations, interviews, and knowledge of the researchers about the community.

INTRODUCTION

Betty Lee Sung

In studies on immigrants and immigration, the focus is generally on the adults. Little, if any, attention is paid the children. Yet the children represent our world of tomorrow, for their upbringing, their environment, their education, their character molding, all have a bearing on our future citizenry. In their developmental stages, children have their own set of concerns and their own spheres of interaction, which perhaps are accentuated by the process of being uprooted and having to adapt to a new country and new culture. What are their experiences and how do they cope? Few studies have dealt with immigrant children, and none have been conducted on Chinese children. In fact, Chinese children were almost an unknown quantity until the last decade or so. The Chinese population in the United States simply did not have many families because of the stringent exclusion laws enacted against them.

Changing Conditions

Relaxation of the laws have brought changes. Today, about 25,000 to 30,000 Chinese come into the United States each year. The base population is about 700,000, which is almost double that of the 1970 census figure. Most of these immigrants head for New York and more specifically for New York's Chinatown. New York City has replaced San Francisco and Honolulu as the main attraction for immigrants.

As one of the newest waves of immigrants to the United States, the Chinese face a different situation from that of previous waves of newcomers. Gone are the unlimited frontiers that symbolized the opportunities that America offered. Disappearing also is the demand for human labor whereby uneducated peasants or artisans from the less developed motherlands could exchange the sweat of their brows for a living, in the hopes that prospects

for tomorrow will be better. In the 1970s expectations are higher and disappointments are more keenly felt. New York City is undergoing its own struggle for survival, and it is not in a position to offer much hope to the new arrivals.

With a more complicated situation and less resources to deal with the problem, the inevitable crisis arise. Chinatowns are no longer the self-contained communities that they once were. Too many people and too many factors are heating up the atmosphere, and the community itself seems unable to cope. The traditional kinship organization are no longer effective. In effect, they are downright outmoded and sometimes hinder rather than help. Social services no longer come from charitable or religious organizations, as they did in the past. Reliance is being placed more and more upon governments, not only at the municipal, but also the state and federal levels.

The nature of governmental aid is that it cannot come in unless there are documented facts to prove the need, and few have studied the Chinese scene objectively to provide the facts or necessary understanding upon which to proceed. That is why I proposed to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Child Development to do a study on Chinese children to see what happens to them when they first immigrate to this country.

Chinatown A Closed Community

To propose is one thing and to effectuate another. The Chinese American scene is somewhat of an unknown quantity, an unexplored territory with eruptions that sporadically make the headlines. But as soon as the dust settles, a shroud descends, wrapping the scene up once more in its inscrutable mysteries.

The shroud was intentional, put there by the Chinese themselves as a survival technique, a defense mechanism to put the Americans off. The reasoning was that if they made themselves inconspicuous, the Chinese would become less of a target for persecution and discrimination. Impotent and powerless to confront directly the assaults and attacks against them, they resorted to devious means to elude and outsmart. They didn't yes their oppressors to death, they didn't fight back. They just put several arms-length distance between them.

In retrospect, this was a clever tactic considering the conditions of the times. But times have changed. The Chinese are no longer a prime target for persecution. The first concerns of the Chinese are no longer hiding from the immigration inspectors. The Chinese population in the United States is multiplying at a high rate and rapid pace. The population is no longer an all adult male group. They are no longer transients but true immigrants come to make this country their future home. Changing conditions call for new solutions to new problems. However, people being what they are, usually try to use old ways to cope with new situations. The adjustment can be trying and painful.

The traditional suspicion toward the American government and the lo-fan, meaning the foreigners, is so deep-rooted it is difficult to get the true answers to questions posed. The Chinese elders especially are reluctant to reveal any information. Dirty linen or accomplishments are best kept within the community and confined to the Chinese people. That is why a community leader will say over a TV network that there is no gang problem in Chinatown in spite of the fact that the TV cameras have just shown the carnage of a gang shootout in a Chinatown restaurant.

Misleading Indicators

To show how facts can be distorted, let's look at an example: Crime is the uppermost fear among the residents in Chinatown although the popular misconception is that it has one of the lowest crime rates of community neighborhoods in New York City. The contradiction lies in the fact that most crimes are seldom reported and are committed by the Chinese against their own kind. Tourists or the white or black visitors that throng Chinatown need have no fear. The cowards will not assault someone whom they think will press charges. The commission of burglaries, extortion, coercion, muggings are not reported to the police. Consequently crime figures are kept low, and an erroneous picture results. Only in talking to the residents are some of the fears expressed, and even these comments are guarded and repressed.

Thus we see why anyone wanting to do research in the Chinese communities cannot be an outsider. To get at the true facts, the person must be familiar with the subtleties, the circumventions, the intricacies, the fronts, and the informal setups that mask the real situations.

Methodology

Our study was to find out what is happening or what are the children experiencing as a result of their migration to this country. We limited our study to immigrant children who have been here two years or less and who we hypothesized are going through a traumatic experience in being uprooted and transplanted to a totally different environment and culture. We wondered how they are coping and whether the experience will leave its impact on the character and personality of the child so that he/she is perhaps strengthened or affected adversely.

The sphere of the child is the home, the school, and the community. What is home life like for these children? How are the schools helping them over this transitional period? Does it make any difference if the children live in Chinatown or away from it?

Mindful of the difficulties mentioned previously about the Chinese community being a closemouthed society, we knew that we would have to modify the conventional research methods relying less on survey, questionnaires, controlled conditions, governmental statistics, numbers and answers from the usual sources coming from the professed leaders of Chinatown. We felt that it was best for us to see for ourselves, to depend on our own eyes, our own ears, and our own assessments. We tried to find the answers to some of our questions by looking, listening, feeling, and being among the people. Of course we set up guidelines to note particular aspects. But we observed many occurrences that we did not expect.

This method has its drawbacks too. We are open to charges of being biased or too subjective, or that our methods are not scientific. Granted, but will the more conventional methods of research reveal better information? We did not think so. As scholars and professionals, we tried our utmost to be objective. Using the participant-observation method and immersing ourselves in the community so that we could work without becoming conspicuous would bring its rewards. As insiders, we were not as suspect. The catch was to be able to notice the unusual or the prevailing, to see things in perspective and not as sensational headlines or isolated incidences. We wanted the panoramic view, the humanistic qualities, values, the relationships, and the emotions not obtainable from tabulations and figures. And we would present our findings as we saw them in our interactions with the people.

We sought our subjects in two schools, one in Chinatown and one

outside. It was necessary to obtain the cooperation of the Board of Education, the school administrators, the teachers, the staff, and the parents. Permissions had to be obtained from most of these in writing. We found the educators to be extremely helpful, which facilitated our research tremendously. It was more difficult to get information from the parents. The younger children were spontaneous. The older children somewhat cautious and shy.

In this report, we are only covering data obtained from children at the elementary school level. Our research will eventually cover those at the junior high level and high school level as well. Dr. Rose Chao took on the responsibility for studying the elementary grade children under my direction, and she is making her data available in this monograph first. Eventually we will deal with our broader subject in a more comprehensive publication.

The Researcher

Dr. Chao was born in China, but raised in New York's Chinatown. She speaks several dialects in Chinese, and she knows the community well. Her professionalism stems from her academic training in psychology and counseling, and her work with Asian and black youths. Her practical application comes from her own position as mother of three children.

Dr. Chao is endowed with an eye for the minutia that proves to be significant. She has written her report based on what she saw and experienced. She has provided us with a glimpse of the daily lives of these children as they strive to make the transition from one culture to another. We hope that the information presented will help those who work with Chinese immigrant children to understand their subjects a little better and to appreciate some of the difficulties that they labor under.

Acknowledgments

For the opportunity to conduct this research, we are indebted to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Child Development for the grant (No. 90-C-920 (01)) that made it all possible. Several other publications are anticipated from this research project, which will appear as additional monographs, articles in journals, or perhaps a book. We are also mindful of the support and contribution given us by the City College of the City University of New York, and the Department of Asian Studies where I teach courses in Asian American studies.

Special thanks go to the school administrators and teachers who gave us 200 percent cooperation, to the parents who gave of their time to talk to us, to the community workers who gave us much insight, and to the Research Foundation of the City University of New York who looked after the fiscal aspects of the grant. We thank you, one and all.

CHINESE IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

ROSE CHAO

Prior to 1965 before Congress passed a new and more liberal immigration act, New York City's Chinatown population was a static figure of 27,000 to 30,000 per year. Most of these recent immigrants head for New York's Chinatown.

Aside from the large increase in numbers, the recent Chinese immigrants are different from their earlier counterparts. Unlike early Chinese immigrants who were mainly males, today's Chinese immigrants come from large urban centers in the Far East. Along with this changing scenario of immigration, numerous problems have risen. For one thing the recent media exposure have alerted and called attention to the increase in juvenile delinquency in Chinatown, dispelling a long-time assumption held by the general public about docile Chinese youths, obedient to their elders.

Berkely Rice, in a 1977 article in Psychology Today, wrote about the once quietest ethnic neighborhood, Chinatown, exploding with new gang violence. Much speculation has attributed this wave of crime, fear, and change to a ten-year flood of young immigrants from Hong Kong. The large numbers of immigrants coming into New York City's Chinatown are taxing the already strained facilities of the few community agencies, trying to cope with the influx. What about the immigrants and their adjustment to the new environment? Immigration is an amalgamation process that brings people of different origins together usually without prior preparation, and it usually produces disruptive consequences, high degrees of social and personal disorganization, and a reorientation of the dominant society's collective goals, moral traditions, and political structures.

To find out what is happening in New York's Chinatown, Prof. Betty Lee Sung of City College New York initiated research to study specifically the "Impact of Immigration on the Development of Chinese American Children." She noted that the burden of adjustment to the new land seemed to fall inordinately heavy upon the shoulders of the children in immigrant families. She was able to obtain researching funding from the Office of Child Development of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to study this phenomenon. This monograph is but a preliminary study and publication of the initial findings of the larger research project.

Prof. Sung asked me to take a specific segment of the research, that is to be responsible for the elementary school children. (The total project involves children from the elementary through the high school level.) My task was to collect data and to observe their interaction in the schools, with their families, and in their communities.

Children in the third and fifth grades were selected from two schools. One school was in Chinatown and one in a suburban neighborhood in Queens. The latter school was selected because of its large enrollment of Chinese American children. One of the main factors we wanted to look at was whether residence in Chinatown had any effect on their adjustment.

The data in this report were collected by participant observation rather than by means of questionnaires. The observation period took place between the fall of 1976 and the summer of 1977. The focus was to relate the child to the total setting. The researchers spent a great deal of time in the classrooms, in the school yards, in the lunchrooms, visiting the families, and scouting the neighborhoods. The purpose was to do an exploratory study. In this preliminary report, we are going to describe what we learned, what we saw, and what we perceived to be sociologically or psychologically significant.

In so doing we may provide information for the enlightenment of teachers, social workers, doctors, community workers, social scientists or any others who may have responsibility for helping Chinese Americans. If anything is to be done the first step is to get the facts and to find out what is happening to children plucked from the Orient and set down in the megaopolis of New York City.

IN CHINATOWN

Children and School

It is early morning about 8:20 a.m. Children are walking to a local elementary school. Many mothers and some fathers are escorting children right up to the school doors. Just outside the school yard, some grown-ups are conversing with one another. The children file into the school. Inside the lunch room is filled with children eating their breakfast. Some mothers linger after their children are inside the school.

In all outward appearances, things seem to be in proper order. It is a good sight to see parents taking an interest in their children. In actuality many of these mothers will not see the children until seven or eight in the evening. Other mothers will expect their children to meet them at the garment factories after school.

Upstairs in a school room set aside for the parents' use, the president of the PTA is trying to hold a meeting before some of the parents start going off to their various jobs. The meeting must start promptly and end no later than 9:15 a.m. The few fathers who escorted their children to school may have just come home from their jobs in the early morning hours. But their fears for the safety of their children are enough motivation to get them out of bed to make sure that their children arrive at school safely. The children accept the escorting service along with the free breakfast as a matter of fact. This is part of the start of every school day.

The elementary school selected for our study in the Chinatown area was chosen for its high percentage of Chinese immigrant children enrolled. The school building itself is quite old, built in 1921. Writings on the walls surrounding the school reveal that many waves of different immigrant children have trampled these grounds. Opposite the school building are lofts housing garment factories. Each morning trucks are seen pulling up to the sidewalk and loading up with finished garments. Many of the mothers of the school children work in these shops across the street. Behind the school building there are rows of old tenements with shops on the ground floors. Most buildings in this area are close to one hundred years old.

The maximum capacity of the school is 914. Enrollment runs about 1,100. The once adequate lunch room is now operating on a double shift in order to feed the students each day. Eight hundred free breakfasts are served every school morning. Before the breakfast clean-up is completed, it is time to serve free lunches to about nine hundred children. The school also operates a nursery program and an after-school center. The attendance record at the school is better than 95 percent. Ninety percent of the students are Chinese. Six Chinese teachers are on the staff. There is a bilingual-bicultural program serving the newly arrived Chinese immigrant children. About three-fourths of the Chinese children are foreign-born.

Unlike schools in other disadvantaged areas there is a general atmosphere of order and discipline in this school. The school personnel seem to enjoy their work. They consider a Chinatown appointment to be "teacher's heaven."

In conversations with the teachers on the question of major problems encountered in the adjustment of recent Chinese immigrant children in the school, the overwhelming consensus of opinion was the language problem. As one teacher said, "Judging from the baffled look on his face, I knew K. C. did not understand the lesson. Yet I could not stop after each sentence to help him. K. C. came to school every day. Occasionally when we were working on some number fact, he showed an understanding while the remainder of the time he just sat,

politely looking miserable. I knew it wasn't fair, but with a class of thirty-four pupils I had to keep going for the sake of the others. I am so glad we are finally having a Chinese bilingual-bicultural program. I am sure K. C. will get more out of school when placed in a class where instruction will be carried out in a language that he understands."

Another teacher pointed out that perhaps living in Chinatown obscures a student's need to realize the importance and urgency to learn English. She said, "Take a look in Chinatown. Doesn't it remind you of Hong Kong? You can get along without ever speaking English. Besides the children in this neighborhood have very few opportunities outside of the school to practice or to use their English."

Yet another teacher lamented that many children are discouraged when they find that without the English skills they can't learn the other subjects. Take Tony for instance, who was ten years old when he first arrived at the school. At that time the school did not have a Chinese bilingual program. Tony was placed in the slowest class of his grade. He began to get discouraged as the months went by when he found himself further and further behind. There was no one to help him with his school work at home. He started to fight with other children. His parents were worried about his behavior and especially his negative attitude towards school.

Without the necessary language skills, it becomes increasingly difficult for these immigrant children to handle many of the tasks set by the curriculum. If this is not remedied quickly the student falls further behind as he goes from one grade to the next. This is especially crucial for the older children. A definite advantage exists for younger children who start in the lower grades but for the ten or twelve-year olds, language becomes a problem. For example I observed in a mixed reading grouping of children ranging from eight to twelve-year olds, the younger ones seem to be less self conscious about their attempts to read whereas the older ones were reluctant to raise their hands to answer a question or volunteer to read a passage. Occasionally you will find the younger ones laughing at some of the mistakes made by the older children.

Aside from being an important tool in functioning well at school, language is important in the development of self concept and motivation. With adequate language skills, a student can better cope with the demands of his school environment and have a greater sense of control over it. If a child is handicapped by limitations in English, he will need special training, but even with the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1974, there were few resources and little attention was paid to special language classes for the Chinese.

The entire extent of English as a Second Language (ESL) programming

in Chinese was limited to some federal funding beginning in 1969 in which only one school offered some ESL instruction from kindergarten to the third grade. After five years, this program was expanded to seven schools in Chinatown, but each school only had one bilingual teacher.

State financing did not begin until 1976 and only got under way at the same time we began our observations and study in the schools. The state grant, however, only provided for four Chinese bilingual teachers.

Tokenism is quite evident when we realize that there are about 23,000 Oriental children in the New York City schools. Of these, approximately 18,000 are Chinese who attend the public school system. One-third of the 18,000 attend school in the Chinatown vicinity. Of these, about 2,000 have some degree of language difficulty. [1]

At the elementary school where I did my observations there were three bilingual-bicultural classes. Grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6 were combined to form three separate classes. These classes totalled about one hundred students.

The instruction alternates between English and Chinese. Reading was conducted in English while other subjects were taught in Chinese. The instructional objective, I was told, is to develop a pupil body that is academically successful in reading, mathematics, and other subject areas in which the children can learn and maintain their native language, Chinese, while they learn English as a second language.

In the early stages of the school's attempt to institute special language classes, there are the inevitable growing pains and problems resulting from inexperience. Curriculum materials need to be developed. The books and instructional materials now used are first and second grade readers. The contents are much too elementary for the upper class children.

At present some of the structural problems of the bilingual-bicultural classes expressed by the teachers are the forming of workable and reasonably homogeneous classes. The size of the classes are too large. Average size of class is about thirty students. It is difficult to provide compatibility among the students because of age background and different native origins. In a class it is possible to have Chinese children who migrated from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Burma and

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1. Interview with Jacob Wong, Director of the Bilingual program at School District 2, Manhattan.

Brazil. The range of competence in Chinese are too broad to form a truly homogeneous class. Because of the above-mentioned difficulties, it becomes necessary to subdivide a class and select suitable teaching materials for each group. While the teacher works with one group the others work with a paraprofessional or the students are left to work alone. Therefore, class instruction time is greatly shortened.

Given the grouping and lack of interesting curriculum materials, the children very often appeared to be restless. For example, during one math period while the teacher was instructing one group in math and going over some math homework, I noticed a girl staring out the window. A blank look registered on her face, her books were open but she was not working. She watched another classmate in the far corner who was talking to the boy next to her. Finally she rested her head on the desk. The teacher came down the aisle, stopped next to her and asked, "Have you done anything?"

"No."

"Better start, otherwise you will have to take it home and do it as homework. Do you understand these problems?"

The girl nodded. She picked up her pencil. Two minutes later she dropped it and once again stared out of the window. Meanwhile two students close to where I was sitting were playing with some toy racing cars. They were fighting to see which car was fastest. Some of the neighboring boys looked on while a couple of boys began to clown around. One of them hit the other on the head with a book. This was a big joke to the children. All around the noise level was rather high. The general sense of disorder was obvious.

In the bilingual classes I have found children drawing, making doll clothes for paper dolls, reading Chinese comic books, and showing off some new toys to friends. Some times a few students were up and walking around, and talking with each other.

When I interviewed the teachers and discussed the restlessness and high noise level in the bilingual classes, I was surprised that many were very tolerant. Their explanation was simply that many children are totally isolated from other playmates when they leave school. Many of them stay with their mothers in the factories after school. They live in tiny apartments that allow no freedom of movement. Therefore the children bring all their energies into the classrooms and ventilate them in the schools.

Others have attributed the unstructured classes to the less restrictive school system found in the United States, which is a new type of freedom unheard of in the Chinese school system in the Far East. The "free time" concept, teachers not being allowed to hit the children, relaxation in discipline, do give rise to children who want to explore and take advantage of the situation. However,

when the activity was relevant to the student's experience and culture I saw students function as a group. The time I found them to be cohesive and working together was when the class was asked to put on a performance for the Chinese New Year celebration assembly. In this incidence the children worked together cooperatively. Parents were recruited to sew costumes. A group painted props. The children found it pleasurable to work together on a task, working as a member of a team and socially interacting.

Most teachers I interviewed agreed that there was really a tremendous need for some sort of intensive English training program in view of the large number of non-English speaking Chinese children in the school. However, opinions varied as to the method best to use. Some felt an intensive all English instruction for a short period of time will help to bring about fluency in the language. Their recommendation was for the new immigrant child to join a non-graded class in which he would be given an intensive immersion course in English only. Subjects like history, math, science and social studies could wait until the student attained some degree of proficiency in English. A definite disadvantage of the pull-out ESL classes was that the students would miss their regular classes during the pull-out period. Therefore their subject courses would be spotty and irregular. Some teachers criticized the bilingual classes for being conducted too much in Chinese.

Parents were also divided in their opinions about bilingual education. Some wanted their children to learn English as quickly as possible, and they felt that bilingual education retarded their English learning. Others were happy to see that their children were not falling behind in subject content.

I wanted to compare schools in Hong Kong or Taiwan to those in New York City to get an idea of what adjustments they had to make. The students complained that schools in Hong Kong were very difficult, and the teachers were strict. Homework was overwhelming to the point that many of their parents had to hire tutors to help their children keep up with their school work. Often they had to stay up until midnight to complete their homework. Many felt they were average to mediocre students in Hong Kong. Yet in the United States they were getting better grades. Mathematics is a favorite subject of the students. Most of them expressed an interest and liking for the American school system, and they enjoyed the new found freedom in the classroom. The general feeling was they were learning a great deal.

Those who disliked school and were having difficulties tended to produce the following responses about the school.

A: I don't like reading in English. English is so confusing.

There are too many grammar rules. I don't think there is enough work in school. I don't think I am learning. Once my mother took me shopping in a store uptown. She wanted me to translate, but I couldn't. She said, "Don't they teach you anything in school?" I feel like I am stupid. I got put back a grade when I came to America.

B: Worst thing about school is it's too long. You stay too many hours at school. In Hong Kong I only go for half a day. The "dark" kids you have to watch out for. They are always making trouble. Ever since I got hit by them in the bathroom, I don't go to the bathroom anymore. The math is too simple, but the English is too hard. You get so discouraged when there is no one to help you after school with homework.

The "dark" kids referred to here are the Hispanics and blacks, mainly the former. There are very distinct ethnic cleavages among the children, and bullying is common by the Puerto Ricans against the Chinese in and out of school.

C: I don't like school. When we did the play on "Hua Mu-lan" I liked it. All of us in class were working on it. It was really nice. I helped my mother sew up my costume. The only thing I can do in school is math. But everything else is hard. My mother complains how bad my brother has turned out in America by going around with bad kids from the school. I miss all my friends in Hong Kong. There is no place you can go. All day long after school I have to stay in my apartment. My mother works, and I don't see much of her. My father hates it here. He doesn't work steadily, sometimes he gets mad and yells at us. I wish we could go back to Hong Kong.

For those who expressed a dislike of school, they are really expressing a loneliness and helplessness with their new environment. They have difficulties with school subjects, yet they don't know how to get extra help. They are not making new friends. They are fearful of non-Chinese students who treat them rough or make fun of them. They found they have few outside recreational space to move about. Sometimes they are frightened when their parents run into problems getting employment.

Children and Family

Other areas of concern expressed by school personnel associated with immigrant children are the increasing number of working mothers among immigrant children and the overprotectiveness of children by immigrant parents. It appears these two phenomena are inconsistent. Working mothers imply a neglect or deprivation of the children while

overprotectiveness implies a concern for the children. In order to understand these two phenomena I approached both teachers and parents with these issues.

The issue of working mothers is becoming so prevalent that the school is concerned when there is a sick child at school. More often than not, I was informed, when the school contacts the home by phone to pick up a sick child, no one is there.

The guidance counselor told me of one extreme case. A child was reported absent for a week by his teacher, and the school notified the district attendance officer to investigate the case. In making the home visit, the attendance officer discovered that the student did not go to school because he had to take care of a younger brother who was ill. The attendance officer also learned that there was no father at home, and the mother worked in Philadelphia. She managed to come home to the children on the weekends every other week. Later on, the school was able to help the mother to stay home by getting the family to receive some assistance from social welfare. Although this is perhaps an extreme case, the fact stands that many immigrant children are latch-key kids and return home to an empty apartment after school.

Another arrangement is for children to go to the factories and stay near their parents at work. One child from the third grade goes to the factory after school each day and all day on school holidays. He told me that he sits next to his mother's sewing machine. He either does his homework or plays with a few other children who are also there. Occasionally when business is slow the children may get a few cardboard cartons from the boss and play make-believe with the boxes. My few trips up to the various factories in the area confirmed the boy's story.

I discussed the problem of working mothers at length with the various members of the school staff. Most agreed that financial hardships faced by most recent arrivals are the reasons for this phenomenon. However, in discussing this issue, most people bring up the neglect of the children when the mother is working.

This was expressed by a teacher. "You can't get the cooperation of these parents when they are both working all day. Sometimes you wonder if they are interested in their children's school work. The parents complain that the children are not given enough homework, but what good is the homework if the child doesn't understand or if there is no one home to help him? For instance, every Friday the children in my class have to take home their folders containing all their school test papers and work. The parents have to sign the papers in the folder indicating to me that they have seen the work. Do you know what I get back on Mondays? The children told me their parents

are too busy, and the teacher is really a busy body."

The president of the school's PTA complained that to get people to come out for the various meetings, they have to hold meetings early in the morning at 8:30. The PTA has been frustrated in getting parental participation in working against cuts in the school budget and other causes. The PTA president said the mothers always give the excuse that they have to work and are too busy. In a facetious remark, she felt most mothers would like to see the school day extended from 8 a.m. till 7 p.m. so their children would be cared for while they are working. The school in a way has been serving as surrogate parents. The children start their day in school at 8:30 a.m. with free breakfast. They are also served lunch. After school some one hundred children remain in the after-school center until 6 p.m.

In interviewing some working mothers I became aware of the tremendous financial burden that rests on the shoulders of most recent Chinese immigrants. Take Mrs. Tong. She works as a seamstress (as most of the Chinese females do) at one of the local factories in Chinatown. She had never worked before in Hong Kong. The Tong family consists of an elderly grandmother, the parents, two boys and a little girl. The Tongs live in a third-floor walk-up apartment that costs them $1,000 in key money. (A lump sum paid either to the landlord or previous tenant just for the privilege of renting that apartment.) Mrs. Tong said the family had borrowed money from relatives for part of their air fare, the key money, and some basic furnitures. In total they had racked up a debt of $3,000. Mr. Tong makes about $150 a week from his job at the factory. The monthly rent is $147. Mrs. Tong cannot see how they could get out from under their debts unless there are two earners in the family. Since the grandmother is too old to work, the only thing left was for Mrs. Tong to work. She confided to me that she worries constantly. Should she or her husband become ill there will be no income. Then what will become of the family?

Mrs. Lee told me that she sews in her own home. Since she has a one-year old, it is not possible for her to go out and work. But once again it was the same concern about accumulated debts that forced her to seek work. The Lees, a family of five, came to the United States under Mr. Lee's brother's sponsorship. They left Hong Kong with five suitcases full of clothing. Everything else had to be bought to furnish their new home. First there was the key money of $700 for the third floor walk-up three-room apartment. Then there was the need to buy a refrigerator, table and chairs, bedding, right down to their rice bowls. When it was finished they had a debt of $1,800.

Mrs. Lee began to panic with Mr. Lee only earning about $120 a week. Rent for the apartment was $150 a month. What about food for the family and the extra cost for a special formula for the baby

who had developed an allergy? Although a number of factories allowed her to bring the baby to work, dust from the garment factories just aggravated the baby's allergy. So Mrs. Lee was forced to bring the work home. There are disadvantages in working at home because the work contracted out to her consists of unattractive items such as pocket linings and collars. These items do not fetch too much money. The going rate is at the price of four to seven cents per item. She often has to sew late into the hours of the night to earn eight to ten dollars a day. All this effort is expended so that they can finish paying off their debts.

Case after case of similar financial hardships makes it necessary for wives to work to help the family out. Often mothers would complain that working takes too much time away from doing household chores, and that the long hours have begun to turn them into robots and machines. There are mothers who take toddlers to work. There are mothers who have their children join them in the factories after school, while still other mothers will wait for older children to return home from school to mind younger children before going off to work.

Most parents see their work as accepting responsibility for their family's support. The children's job is to get an education. They do not see how they can contribute to helping their children in their school work. The most obvious drawback is that the parents do not speak or write English. Whether the child does well or poorly is his responsibility. As one parent summed it up for me, "I brought my children here to give them a better chance than the one I had. Good or bad it will be what they make of it. The parents also feel that education should be left up to the teacher.

Still another aspect stressed by the school is the overprotectiveness of immigrant children by their parents. I had noticed the unusually large number of parents escorting their children to and from school. I was told by some teachers that Chinese parents in the Chinatown area have always wanted to protect their children from being too Westernized by maintaining a tight control over their children. Here is what one teacher said to me, "The parents are very overprotective of their children. Did you notice that down in the auditorium in the back rows during lunch time there are parents feeding their children — even the older ones yet. They will not allow their children to go out by themselves. Have you ever seen so many mothers sending and picking up their children? Naturally some fears are justifiable; there are gangs in the local area. But this does not prepare the child to handle and take care himself as he gets older. It's worse yet for the girls; they have absolutely no freedom."

I visited with T. M.'s mother one morning outside of the school when she brought her two boys, an eight and an eleven-year old to school. It was a cold morning. The weather was below freezing. The mother carried a ten-month old infant on her back. The baby was

bundled up, and she was rather out of breath from her heavy bundle. I asked her why she would not let the boys come to school by themselves. She was very serious when she said she was afraid for their safety. Just a month ago the son of a friend was beaten up and badly hurt on his way home from school by a local gang member. And not too long ago, another young college student was accidentally shot when he came out of one of the local theaters. She would rather take the trouble to send and pick up the boys than to see any harm come to them. Maybe her fears are genuine. Her two boys have mentioned to me that once home from school they are not allowed to go outside unless one of their parents are with them.

Another mother, a Mrs. Yu, will walk up and down from her sixth floor apartment to send and to pick up her children from school. Each morning either she or her husband will bring their three children to school. At lunch time, she will return with her baby in a stroller, pick up her son from kindergarten and feed him some lunch brought from home. Then she will sit in the auditorium with her two children and wait till three o'clock to pick up the older two. Then all four children and mother will return home. One day I realized that I had not seen Mrs. Yu in her usual seat in the auditorium for a week. Upon seeing her the next time I asked her how things were. She told me that her husband, one of the older girls, and the baby were down with the flu. Since she had no one to help or turn to she did not send the nine and six-year old to school. I asked, "Couldn't the children come to school by themselves?" Her reply was simply she did not feel it would be safe. The Yus live five blocks away from the school.

Another working mother I know has been sending and picking up her three children everyday. When I asked whether this interferes with her working, she told me before she took this job, she made sure it was all right with the boss for her to take off an hour everyday near the end of the school day to pick up her children. She then sees them safely home before returning to work. I asked would she give up her job had her boss not agreed to give her the hour off each day. Her reply was, "Yes." She said it was no joking matter as far as the safety of her children was concerned. Not only she but other co-workers in her factory make similar arrangements to take time off around 3 p.m. to escort their children home from school.

Over and over again in my discussion with parents I felt that their excessive concern and watchfulness over their children was based on strong fears. The children accepted this element of fear in their lives without too many questions and they live with it. However, from time to time in talking with these children and asking them what they missed in their lives in America, most responded that they missed some of the freedom they had overseas.

The phenomena of working mothers and their overprotective attitude toward their children reflect the insecurities, both financial and physical, experienced by immigrant families. If we take

Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, we can say that the Chinese immigrant families are trying to fulfill very basic needs for safety and nurturance. The concern is for one's immediate family. There is an acceptance of existing conditions and a willingness to assume responsibilities necessary to keep one's family together and safe.

Mrs. Lee comes from Hong Kong. She was the sixth of nine children. Her family was not affluent, but with the girls helping in the father's tailoring business the family managed. Mrs. Lee completed the first year of high school. Twelve years ago a matchmaker approached Mrs. Lee's mother with an eligible bachelor whose brother had emigrated to the United States. The matchmaker said that the bachelor would eventually join his brother in America.

At the time of the appearance of the matchmaker Mrs. Lee was corresponding with an upper classmate who had gone to Taiwan to study. She described herself as one of the "modern" young women of Hong Kong. In her mind she had felt sure that she would marry for love, but not so. Within a short time after the matchmaker's appearance, Mrs. Lee was bethrothed and married to Mr. Lee who was ten years her senior. Mrs. Lee's mother had seized upon this union as a key to open doors for other members of the family to come to America. The ultimate goal entailed a long period of waiting. Mr. Lee's brother had to become a citizen first and then file petitions for his relatives. It was almost ten years later before the Lees arrived in the United States in late June 1976. Mrs. Lee still recalled the initial shock of first seeing Chinatown. She was not prepared for the filth and old tenement apartment awaiting them. The years of anticipation and the waiting for the promised land brought keen disappointment when there was nothing but rats and roaches in their new home. She remembered how she cried on her first night, how the children wanted to go home, and how her husband was angry with them.

Her friends had envied her coming to the United States. Her husband who had a blue collar job in Hong Kong was now a stock clerk at one of the meat markets in Chinatown. Everyday he lifts heavy cartons and delivers them to the various restaurants in Chinatown. The work is physically exhausting. Most days her husband is too tired to do much besides sleep after work.

I asked Mrs. Lee what did she expect from America? Her response was, "A nice apartment, modern conveniences, green lawns, and trees." She was definitely not prepared for housing worse than the one she had left behind in Hong Kong. I asked if she would prefer to return to Hong Kong. She said there was no turning back. They had accumulated a huge debt from their immigration. There were lawyer fees, processing fees for the visas, airfare, security for their apartment, and other furnishings. Besides other members of their families are waiting eagerly in Hong Kong for her to get them out. The dream of the "Mountain of Gold" dies hard.

I asked whether or not her brother-in-law had warned her of conditions to be expected in the United States. She said, "Oh yes, the letters told us of the hard work, but we thought it was a put-off to discourage us."

"Do most people in Hong Kong want to leave?" I asked. "Oh yes, definitely. We have friends who have tried every which way to secure visas. Some have tried to go to Canada and from there to the United States. Others have arranged to get visiting visas and once in the United States take their chances on getting permanent residence." The gargantuan efforts which they exert to get here only makes the disappointments that much more difficult to accept.

Invariably the new immigrant steps down in occupational status. Most of the children's fathers now work in the restaurants, the grocery stores, or the garment factories regardless of the type of work they performed previously. Few can obtain work outside of Chinatown because of their language deficiency.

The inadequate and poor housing means overcrowding for most families and there is very little privacy in the homes. In my home visits to apartment after apartment, I saw tiny rooms overcrowded with bunk beds, or in other cases, wall-to-wall mattresses.

The winter of 1977 was one of the coldest winters in New York's history. During that winter, the Chus, a family of six, slept in a 8' x 10' room. Their apartment was a three-room sixth-floor walk-up. The tiny kitchen is about 8' x 10'. In this room there is a television, four chairs, a kitchen table and two refrigerators. One is broken and the Chus had to purchase a new one recently. The old one serves as a storage cabinet since there is none in the kitchen. A tiny gas stove stands inches from the door with an old sink next to it. There is an electric heater in the center of the room. I was alarmed to find only one electric outlet in the kitchen. It was heavily overloaded with plugs. Since the Chu's apartment was on the top floor, the unmelted snow accumulated during the two previous snowfalls had made the ceilings in the apartment very damp. In a corner of the kitchen ceiling near the pipes, there was a steady drip.

The front room in the apartment overlooking the street had not been used the entire winter; the temperature in that room only differed a few degrees from the temperature outside. There was no heater in this room. Another reason was that Mrs. Chu kept the window next to the fire escape opened a crack because of fear of fire. There had been a fire a few buildings down the block several months ago. Mrs. Chu wanted to be able to open the window so that the family could make its escape quickly. Fear of burning to death was greater than the discomfort of the bitter cold. So all the Chus did their living, eating, and playing in the tiny kitchen and slept side by side next to each other in the 8' x 10' room.

Or take the Chans. They have three sets of bunk beds in a large room. The parents, two boys of 19 and 17, and two girls of 13 and 11 sleep in it. The bathtub is located in the kitchen right next to the front door. Mrs. Chan made a curtain around it. There is really no privacy anywhere. I asked the children in the various classes that I observed whether anyone slept in a room by themselves. Not a one. About half of them have their own beds while the other half usually share a bed with a sibling.

The children have very little room to play in these apartments. I noticed that most of them either sit in front of a television, or in cases where the televisions are near the beds, the children will lie on the beds and watch television. I did not see much other activities that the children did in the apartments. With the increased concern that the streets and the neighborhood are unsafe, most of the children are kept off the streets. So there is only school and going home to very cramped quarters and endless hours of television.

As mentioned earlier there are many homes where both parents worked. In these cases the children have regular chores and sometimes heavy responsibilities. When walking home one afternoon with May, a fifth grader, we stopped off at the factory where her mother works. An older sister from junior high school had already arrived home from school and was sitting next to the sewing machine where her mother was working. An older brother was pressing a garment. Her mother gave May some money and told her some of the things she wanted done for the day. May stopped by a corner grocery not far from the factory where she picked up some eggs and bread. I followed her to the apartment. May washed the dishes in the sink, and swept the floor. Then she gathered the family laundry and we headed toward the laundromat two blocks away. Since May's older sister and brother help at the factory, her job is to take care of the house and get things ready for her mother to cook after work.

Another boy from the sixth grade picks up his younger sister from the afternoon kindergarten session. He takes her home and watches her until the parents come home from work about seven in the evening.

I have described disillusionment, poor housing, and premature responsibilities shouldered by the children. I did not encounter complaints about anything except crimes and violence in the area. Most families accept the conditions they found themselves in and live with them. There is general caring between parent and children. In most of the homes I visited the parents were extremely concerned and tried to look after their children. There was always plenty of food to go around, and children were loved and valued regardless of the financial condition of the parents.

Children and Community

A recent documentary on television showed many Chinese coming off the jumbo jet at Kennedy Airport in New York. When interviewed about their destination they just said, "Chinatown." In face of a strange environment it is human nature to seek out the familiar. Until recent years New York's Chinatown has always been small and an insular place reminiscent of the bygone small towns in America. With the increased influx of immigrants the original boundaries of New York City's Chinatown have expanded. As the community's population increased, the once cohesive, neighborhood quality of the area disappeared. The various kinship associations that had served as a liason for the new arrivals in the past are being replaced by the multiservice agencies in the community. In that sense the transitional period of adjustment for the recent arrivals are no longer in the hands of families or clansmen. The net result is a feeling of impersonalization.

In walking around Chinatown one gets the feeling that it is a business community. Shops, restaurants, and factories are squeezed into every available space. The residents who work in the community live in the community.

In the last decade or so, a number of service agencies have been established to meet the social needs of the residents. These agencies serve all ages from children to the elderly. There are nurseries, after-school centers, health clinics, manpower training centers, mental health agencies, senior citizen centers, street worker programs for the local street gangs, adult education English programs, child welfare agencies, etc. However, recent fiscal cuts have seen a number of agencies curtail their services or close down. The most frequent services sought by the immigrant family are health care and "survival" information (i.e. how to get a social security number, how to get a telephone installed, how to fill out an income tax return, etc.).

Chinatown is a community where most of its residents are concerned about crime. In the various families I interviewed and met the most prevalent concern was for safety. The parents fear that their children will become victims of gang harassments or that their children may join the gangs.

Chinatown is definitely not a neighborhood geared toward children. It originated as an abode for adult males. The streets are narrow, winding and cobblestoned. Only one street, the Bowery approaches the standard street width of 24 feet. Some streets like Pell and Doyer only permit the passage of one car and even the single

traffic lane crowds the pedestrians on the three-feet-wide sidewalks. Canal Street, one of the main streets in Chinatown is an east-west thoroughfare leading to the Holland Tunnel. Truck traffic is particularly heavy and a count by the City Planning Commission revealed that traffic volume runs close to 2,000 vehicles per hour (a high volume traffic flow is 500 vehicles per hour). Pedestrian traffic is equally high. On the average, nearly 8,600 people pass through the intersection of Canal and Mott Streets every hour on Saturdays, while 10,000 people pass the intersection of Mott and Bayard which is one block into Chinatown.[2] The volume on Sundays was impossible to count. Anyone who has tried to manuever through Mott Street on Sundays knows that it is like pushing through Times Square on New Years Eve. The traffic volume alone makes it an unsafe area for children.

The congestion, the noise, the high density of population creates another problem, that of garbage and waste. The volume of refuse generated by all these people overflows into the streets and sometimes garbage on the sidewalk makes it all but impassable. The garbage is unsightly and smelly and invites pests and rodents. Rats as big as cats wax fat on the endless food supply and create a health hazard as well as a continual frightening specter for the inhabitants. I nearly jumped out of my seat in the Chu's apartment when a huge rat ran right across my feet.

Real estate is at a premium in Chinatown. It seems that demand for a location is so great that prices are way out of line for rentals. Dilapidated buildings command astronomical prices. An old firehouse sold at auction by the City for $300,000 in 1976. When told that he had paid too much, the successful bidder laughed and retorted, "I was offered $350,000 for it the next day."

The buildings are in advanced stages of disrepair. Many of them are rent controlled so rentals are low, but "key money" is high. Descriptions of the housing conditions were already given above.

When we talk about Chinatown, we refer not only to the original core area of eight city blocks bounded by Baxter, Canal, and the Bowery but to the enlarged boundaries adjoining the core area which stretches from the municipal buildings to the southwest, the East

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2. New York City Planning Commission. "Chinatown Street Revitalization." 1975. pp 27-29

River on the east, and as far north as Houston Street. The neighborhood is considered part of the Lower East Side, one of the worst slum areas in New York City. Chinatown used to be an island unto itself as if an invisible moat separated it from the teeming immigrants of other nationalities and color. As mentioned earlier, it had few families and few children.

Only one park, Columbus Park, one square-block in area, is found within the boundaries of Chinatown proper. A few peripheral ones are Forsyth Street Park which is more of a "danger zone" rather than a recreational area. A few school play-yards have ball courts, but these are always overcrowded.

As one community leader told me, they never had any problems with the youths in the community until recently. He said, "On the one hand the community was small enough so that one inevitably knew the family that a child belongs to. If you saw the child doing something that you considered wrong, word could be passed quickly back to the parents. In that sense there was community control over behavior. On the other hand, the children knew their place in the community and lived up to the expectations of the adults."

Most of the families I came to know would like to move away from Chinatown. To them it is a place to work or shop for their groceries. There is no attachment to the community in the sense that this is our neighborhood or our street. Once they close the doors to their apartments there is a shut off from the community. Most families do not belong to the existing kinship associations. Families with children especially expressed a desire to move away for the sake of their children. I sensed an urgency to do so especially among families with children in the elementary school levels. They hope to be able to get out of the area by the time their children enter junior high school.

SUBURBIA CHINESE

Children and Schools

Limited housing facilities, exorbitant key money, and crime in the Chinatown area have driven many immigrant Chinese families to seek housing away from Chinatown. In recent years, numerous Chinese families have settled into various sections of Queens County with a large number concentrated in the Jackson Heights - Elmhurst area. In these tree-lined communities, the families have purchased homes. During morning and evening rush hours many Chinese faces can be seen rushing toward entrances to the subways in these areas.

The schools in these Queens areas have shown an increase in Chinese student enrollment. Since a portion of our research dealt with the environmental factor involved in the adjustment process of immigrant children, the natural tendency was to select an area in New York City outside of Chinatown with a large Chinese population. An elementary school in the Elmhurst area met our criteria. The school selected is situated in a neighborhood of private homes and an occasional high-rise apartment complex. This school, too, is an older one built in the 1930s, but two wings have been added onto the main building. The enrollment is approximately 1,100 and this number exceeds the school's capacity. Whereas most schools in New York City have experienced large drops in student enrollment, those that service Asian immigrant groups are filled to capacity.

In 1974, close to 15 percent of the student population was Oriental, and ten percent was Chinese. A little over 50 percent of the students were majority-group whites. Other Spanish, meaning all except Puerto Ricans, made up twenty percent of the pupils. Puerto Ricans and Blacks ranged from five to six percent each. Obviously the school was well integrated.

The attendance record of the school averages above ninety percent. The reading scores are above grade, however, the math scores are slightly below grade. Classes are only from kindergarten to the fifth grade.

As bilingual classes in Spanish are mandated in New York City schools, there are bilingual classes for the Spanish-speaking students, but the Chinese students only have three hours of English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) instruction per week. The usual approach to ESL classes is to pull the student out of his regular classes to attend special language instruction. The school only has a part-time ESL instructor and the children meet with her two days a week.

The content of these ESL classes consist of instruction in the oral language skills of listening, comprehension, and speaking. These are the basics.

In addition, the instructor spends time focusing on the parts of speech that cause the student the most difficulty. In the case of the Chinese students, drills were given on tense and articles.

The goal of ESL instruction is to meet the immediate communication and curriculum needs of the students by providing them with the language skills they need to communicate with teachers and peers, and to receive content matter in English. I interviewed teachers and questioned the pull-out method of ESL. In particular, does a student miss out on subject matter while he goes off to learn English? I was told that it may be a possibility.

As the student is exposed to math, reading, art, and so forth, the student is also exposed to the language used to communicate the content of those subjects. But there is ample evidence in the previous successful adjustment records of other Chinese children as they progressed in the school. English proficiency differs for students coming from Hong Kong and Taiwan, although there are some exceptions. Generally speaking, most of the students from Hong Kong have been exposed to some instructions in English. They come to the school with some knowledge of the alphabet and a limited vocabulary, while the Taiwan students are more deficient in English.

The ESL approach in this school is reported working well for the Chinese students. The external conditions whereby these children receive enough exposure to English outside the school and their being a minority in the community, which forces them to function as a native speaker in a relatively short period of time, may also contribute to the success of the ESL approach.

In the school, everyone seems to be genuinely pleased with the recent Chinese immigrant students. These children have been described as polite, obedient, hard working, and bright. There were some curiosities expressed by a few teachers wishing to know a little about the Chinese school systems overseas. The teachers were impressed with the mathematical competency shown by these students. Although the teachers acknowledged there is a language problem encountered by the immigrant student, most of them reassured me that the children catch up quickly within a year or two. I corroborated this statement when I visited the intellectually gifted children classes of the fourth and fifth grades. There, a number of Chinese children were introduced to me who have been in the United States less than five years. A teacher told me about a boy named George from Taiwan who

has been in the United States a little over two years. He is one of the top students in the fourth grade. Apparently the teacher was very impressed with George's phonetic skills. The teacher could give George almost any difficult word and the boy would pronounce it correctly. I took this question up with George one afternoon in the school yard. This is a transcript of our conversation.

R.C.: George, can you tell me how you learned to read English so well?

George: (a little embarrassed by the compliment) I just learn it. I think I speak and read like everyone else.

R.C.: Can you tell me how your head works when you pronounce a word that you've never seen or heard?

George: Do you know Mandarin? Do you know the ping ying fu hao? (a Chinese phonetic system used to help pronounce Chinese characters.)

R.C.: Yes.

George: It's like this. When we started school in Taiwan, we were taught to use the ping ying fu hao. It was written next to all the words to help us pronounce the word. I think I do the same with English words. When I first started school here, the teacher taught us the vowels and consonants of the American alphabet. It reminded me of the ping ying fu hao. So that's how I learn how to pronounce correctly.

I was introduced to other "amazingly bright" immigrant children. Annie was a fifth grader who has been in school five weeks. She started school in March after the school term had already started. She was placed in the slowest class in the grade.* During one lunch period the class teacher showed me some of Annie's test papers and work. On test paper after test paper in math and spelling, one hundred was marked across the top. The teacher said she is very sure that with additional ESL classes in intermediate junior high school which Annie will be attending in the fall, she will catch up in no time at all.

While visiting Annie's family I inquired about the school work.

* A practise that tends to put a stigma on the new immigrant children.

She thought the math level in the fifth grade American school was equivalent to the math she had in the second grade in Hong Kong. I asked her about the spelling and how was she able to spell all the words correctly on her test papers. She told me that she had to spend an average of five to six hours each day on her homework in Hong Kong. Now her homework takes only an hour or so. She has so much time to memorize a few spelling words, she makes sure she gets it right. Besides every morning another Chinese girl in the same grade tutors her. This tutor lives very near to Annie, so that she can ask her any questions that come up after school.

One of the things that most impressed me in my observations in this school was a peer-group tutoring program. The ESL teacher in the school recruited a group of brighter children volunteers from the fifth grade. They serve as individualized tutors every morning for fifteen to twenty minutes. These students are assigned to all the non-English speaking students from the English Club which is an ESL program. Where possible, a match of similar ethnic background is sought. Each tutor is introduced to the student as well as the student's teacher. These tutors meet once a week with the ESL teacher to find out what lessons the students are working on. If there is any trouble, it is brought up during these meetings. The teacher makes suggestions and recommendations.

The new immigrant children are part of the regular school program and courses. The only help they receive in addition to ESL classes is from the peer tutoring. The content of the ESL lessons are tied to things that are relevant and useful. The topic may be on things associated with the school, the neighborhood, foods in the supermarket, or how to use the telephone to call up friends. These things are immediately useful to the student in negotiating his new environment. Pre-and post-test results show great improvements made by the students in English. Students are usually not retained more than two school years in the English club.

Every morning as one walks through the school corridors there are pairs of heads bending over books and homework outside of the classrooms in the hall. Both the teachers and principal agreed that this system of peer tutoring helps a great deal not only in terms of school work but also in the initial adjustment and orientation period for students coming into a strange school system.

Perhaps it is a reflection of the school's policy for students to be helpful to one another. In any case there is a great deal of friendly outreach by the students to other newly arrived students. Take Gary's case. He is in the second grade. Gary has been here only three months. During the first two weeks I noticed that Gary was shy and withdrawn. He preferred to stand near the wall in the yard after lunch. I chatted with him a few times. He told me about

missing his friends back home. Occasionally I would see a few boys from his class asking Gary to join in their games. Each time Gary would shake his head. By the end of the first month while I was making my rounds in the school yard I was hit by a ball. I turned around to see who was responsible. I found Gary looking up at me to say he was sorry. He had lost control of the ball in a game of handball with some of the boys. He was already part of the crowd.

For Annie it was the same. After lunch, she would sit near the school fence. The other girls from her class would ask her to jump rope. Little by little she would join in their games. The girls in Annie's class were very resourceful. Perhaps it started with the teacher who had asked the class to help welcome Annie to the school. At first the girls in the class had asked me to serve as translator for them in the school yard so they could converse with Annie. However, I found that my job as translator did not last very long. A week later the girls were tired of this two-step process to communicate. During my walk I overheard this conversation.

Girl 1: Let's get Annie to teach us Chinese while we teach her English.

Girl 2: Okay, but how?

Girl 1: Let's point to a thing. First we will say it in English, then we can ask Annie to say it in Chinese.

I was approached to explain it to Annie to make sure she understood the girl's plan. I don't know whether this plan continued when I was not there to observe. But I was left with a strong impression that the children in the school were very helpful to the newly arrived immigrant children. I also noticed that these Chinese children did not segregate themselves in the school yard from the main group who sought to make friends with them.

Children and Families

The living conditions of the families in suburbia differed from the ones I encountered inside Chinatown. In Queens the housing is much better. The families live in modern apartment complexes or they rent units in two-family houses. There is separation of living and sleeping quarters in the homes.

A common pattern of immigration history with these families

is that the father came to the States first and the mother and children later joined him. For many of the children, the father is a stranger to them, so that adjustment to life in the United States is not only adjustment to a new environment but also of family members getting to know one another all over again.

In the case of Tommy, his father came to the United States seven years ago. Later he was able to get friends in the restaurant to sponsor him for permanent residence as a chef. This took quite a while. Meanwhile, Tommy, his mother, and an elder brother lived comfortably in Taiwan on the remittance sent by the father. When the father got his permanent residence status he sent for his family seven years later. Tommy confided in me that he was afraid of his father.

Mrs. Chi, a plump woman in her early thirties told me she herself was having trouble getting used to having a man around the house. During the early part of their marriage her husband had worked on board freighters as a seaman. There were prolonged separations for them. Between trips Mr. Chi would dock at home for a month or two. Since Mr. Chi had not seen his family perhaps for a year, during those stays it would be like vacations for the family. There were trips to the restaurants and the movies. He would dote on the boys knowing that he would be leaving them soon. Mr. and Mrs. Chi's relationships during these times also lack the abrasiveness of daily contacts. During the six years of his absence while waiting for his papers Mrs. Chi's life style became even more easy going. Her time was spent with visits to friends' homes, shopping, and sitting at the mah jong table.

When the family arrived in the United States, she found that her husband was very demanding. He was impatient with them. He felt she should go to work since the boys were both in school. She was not accustomed to working. He became very strict with the boys demanding that they spend time catching up on English. He still dotes on the boys. The two shiny five-speed bikes are evidence of this. What is happening she feels is that now they have to be a family. Each one must learn to get along with the change. For her it is almost like getting married all over again. She said the older son perhaps is having a much rougher time. She sees less of a problem for Tommy who is younger.

Mrs. Chi's other friends who live in the area are also former seamen's wives. One afternoon when I dropped in for a visit, I found two other wives there too. These women also expressed similar tales of getting used to having their husbands around. They too talked about missing the "easy" lives they left behind. They asked if I knew how to play mah jong, hoping to get a little game started for that afternoon. Needless to say they were a little disappointed when I declined their invitation.

Many of the women in this Queens area did not work outside of their homes. Among the ones with younger children the work they did included baby sitting for other working mothers, knitting on small-scale looms, stringing costume jewelry or doing some light sewing brought home from Chinatown factories. The women with older school-age children work in garment factories in Chinatown. Most of the fathers are in restaurant work, with a few holding office jobs.

The children in this Queens area said their families take them out quite often. These outings are in the form of shopping at the various malls, eating out, visiting parks, and visiting other family friends. An explanation for this difference in activity patterns may be that in the Chinatown area with its unsafe streets, families may be discouraged from going out too often. Also, to travel away from the Chinatown area means using English to negotiate trains and buses. High density population in Chinatown means less playground or recreational facilities, whereas more recreational facilities exist in the Queens area and, therefore, are more accessible for the use of its residents. It was apparent that Chinese families in Queens lived a more balanced life of work and recreation.

From the furnishings found in the various homes I visited it would appear that financially the recent immigrant families living in this area are slightly better off than those living in Chinatown. It must be stressed that my conclusion is based on inference and is not positively proven. The rents in the Queens area are much higher than those in Chinatown. Most of the families I visited live in apartments where the rents ranged from $250 up, while those living in Chinatown paid rents from $100 to $150. However, the Queens residents do not pay key money.

The children in Queens also have more toys and books. For the boys there were new bicycles. I tried to assess the earnings between men in Chinatown and those in Queens. Since most men hold restaurant jobs where often the tips are unreported I was not sure how accurate or truthful their responses were. Generally speaking most men in Chinatown reported earnings between $125 and $150 a week. For the Queens area they reported weekly earnings between $200 and $240. As I've mentioned, these figures came from a small size population, and they were from those who were willing to give me the information. So it is a very selective sample and may not reflect the true earning capacity of the family. Not taken into account either was the family financial resources -- whether the wife worked and whether there were previous savings.

I was surprised to learn that some of the families in Queens

came with substantial savings or other forms of financial holdings. The Chins have been in the United States since April 1977. They moved into their one-family home in July 1977. In talking with Mr. Chin I learned that he had worked as a maintenance mechanic aboard freighters for the last twenty-five years. In Hong Kong, Mr. Chin was the owner of an entire top floor of a building. Ten years ago he had contracted with a builder to expand his apartment by building an extra level into the existing roof thus converting his apartment into a duplex. Besides this, Mr. Chin had other realty holdings in another section of Hong Kong. When he came to the United States he sold out his holdings for fifty thousand United States dollars. With this money he was able to purchase a home for his family in Queens.

Mr. Wang owns an efficiency apartment complex in Taiwan. He has twenty-five apartments ranging from one to two bedrooms. He leases these apartments mainly to American military families stationed in Taiwan. However, with the uncertainties of the political situation in Taiwan, Mr. Wang feared that his business would be affected. He sent his wife with their children here to the United States in 1975. He himself left Taiwan in 1976. He has taken a unionized job as a salad chef in one of the larger hotels in midtown Manhattan. He is thinking of going into some sort of small business. At present his younger brother is in charge of his Taiwan apartments. As soon as Mr. Wang settles on a business venture he intends to return to Taiwan to sell out his holdings.

A firm financial base does make a difference and is reflected in Mr. Wen's career change. Mr. Wen and his family came to the United States to join his parents who had migrated eight years earlier. Mr. Wen's parents owned some properties in Hong Kong. He sold those when he came to the United States. His parents thought of opening a family restaurant business when their son joined them. This started a one-year apprenticeship for Mr. Wen at one of the Chinese restaurants in Chinatown. When his training ended the Wens bought a take-out restaurant in Long Island. The restaurant business involved long hours and numerous hardships for the various members of the family. Mr. Wen did not like the role of a cook since he was an office worker in Hong Kong. His mother could not get used to the long hours and heavy lifting in the kitchen. Mrs. Wen did not like leaving the two children with the grandfather who was inexperienced while she helped out as cashier.

After eight months the business was in trouble, but they were able to sell the business to another Chinese family. With the money from the sale, Mr. Wen started thinking seriously about different job options. The family's finances were still in good shape for him to look into possible new job training. Mr. Wen

contacted a manpower training program and started a six-month training course in the making of dentures. Now he works in a large laboratory five days a week and is very pleased with his decision.

This merely reinforces the fact that financial resources have definite impact on the children. Parents with financial resources can take away the fears of immediate uncertainty from their children in a new environment. It also means fathers can explore other job options which can result in more leisure time available for them to spend with their families.

It seems that the primary concerns of the families in the Queens area is not so much on the physical safety of their children. Rather, they fear that the children are becoming too Americanized and are forgetting their Chinese heritage. This feeling was voiced by mothers, especially those whose children migrated at a younger age. Mrs. Wang told me that of her three children only the eldest daughter retained some of her Chinese speaking ability. The two younger boys who only went to kindergarten and nursery school in Taiwan have forgotten most of their Chinese.

According to Prof. Sung,[3] today's Chinese immigrants come from two polarized groups as a result of the preference system set up under the immigration laws. Priority is given to family reunification and those with needed skills, good educations, or substantial sums to invest in business ventures. Consequently, we get a large percentage of professionals and upper-middle-class immigrants who migrate because of the political and economic instabilities in Hong Kong and Taiwan. On the other hand, we are seeing the reunification of families of the earlier immigrants who are largely of the lower socio-economic classes. The former do not crowd into Chinatowns. The latter invariably do.

Children and the Community

Preliminary observation seems to reveal that those Chinese who live in Elmhurst area of Queens came directly into the neighborhood without having resided previously in Chinatown. This is a point we want to substantiate with further inquiry. It would dispel some popular notions that Chinatown is a transitional place.

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3. Betty Lee Sung. A Survey of Chinese American Manpower and Employment. Praeger, 1976. pp. 15-16

In fact, the Jackson Heights-Elmhurst area may be called a satellite Chinatown. The proximity of many Chinese faces, the availability of Chinese stores and services offer the new immigrants the security and comfort of being with their own people.

Contrasted with living in Chinatown, the children have more room to run around in and play. The overwhelming fear that plagues Chinatown families is not present with the parents living in Queens, although recent rumors have it that the gangs are trying to establish a foothold in the area.

The Chinese immigrant children have greater freedom of movement in the Queens community. These children play outside more often after school. The relatively safe streets encouraged more visiting back and forth by the children. Instead of being kept at home after school, I see more children riding their bikes or playing in the playgrounds. The children go to movies with friends or older siblings on Saturday mornings. Since the Chinese children are a small number in this community there are greater opportunities to associate with other non-Chinese children. The children have other role models available to them. This is reflected in conversations I had with the children. Some of the responses to my question of what they wanted to be were very interesting. One boy told me he wanted to be a baseball player. Apparently he and another boy have gone to see many baseball games at the neighboring Shea Stadium. Another boy would like to work for an airline. His neighbor next door works for one of the airlines. As a fringe benefit he and his family can go to many different places at reduced rates. The boy was impressed by the number of side trips his neighbor's family took. He wanted to do the same when he grows up.

Being exposed to different models also applies to parents. Chinese parents see how other families raise their children. They can see households that are not adult-centered. One mother told me she liked the fact that children in the United States are not pushed in school but left to a more natural development. She told me in Hong Kong she had to drive her children to make sure they kept up with their studies and she worried about the entrance examination that her daughter had to take to get into one of the better junior high schools. She likes the way children are treated in the American schools. She feels it is much better for both herself and her children under this less tense atmosphere.

One father told me he is spending more time with his children because he was surprised at the large number of fathers who play with their sons at the sandlot on weekends. He also began to feel that he was losing his son's affections when he found that his son opted to spend more and more time in his friend's house with his friend's father. His son would come home with stories of the games

that they played and the fun that they had, and he felt that unless he paid some attention to his son, he was going to lose him.

"It's so different from the way I was brought up," he said. "My father was a very distant figure. I was afraid of him, but American fathers are like friends to their children." He sees himself changing a bit. He will take his children out on his day off, but he told me he hasn't gotten around to the point where he can joke with them. He feels that this lowers his dignity, and he wants to appear dignified in the eyes of his children.

Most of the Chinese immigrant families in this Queens area identify themselves less with the total community, and more with their friends and families in the area. They tend to seek each other's company. When I visited one family living in an apartment complex I would find other Chinese wives in the same building dropping in. The women formed mutual-help groups. If there is a friend who has a car they will drive into Chinatown together to shop or do errands. They also exchanged baby-sitting services when needed.

The life style of Chinese immigrant families outside of Chinatown is vastly different from that within Chinatown, but it also seems that the people who head toward Chinatowns are different to begin with. The Chinatown residents are more likely to be Cantonese-speaking, poorer and perhaps in debt from the huge expenses incurred in coming to the United States, and have little or no knowledge of the English language.

The immigrant families in Elmhurst seem to be more secure financially. They can afford the higher rents or even afford to buy a two- or three-family house. The rents they receive help defray a large part of their housing costs.

Although the types of occupations open to both groups are essentially the same -- restaurant jobs for the men and garment factory work for the women -- it seems that the Elmhurst residents manage to earn higher pay.

Chinatown residents live in perpetual fear for the safety of their children. The Elmhurst residents are concerned that their children will lose their cultural heritage. Children in Elmhurst seem to pick up English faster and are able to catch up with their studies within a relatively short time. They also integrate more rapidly and live in a physically safer environment.

We realize that our studies are based on observations and are preliminary. However, we wanted to point out some of the highlights

of our findings and make them available to interested parties as quickly as possible. We intend to continue our research with the upper-grade-level children and eventually try to bring out the differences in cultures that these immigrant children must bridge.

CONCLUSION

Betty Lee Sung

In conducting our research, we did not want to do it without purpose. We were aware that problems were festering among the Chinese, and that these problems were crying for a solution. What did we set out to do? What was our purpose? We felt that the first step was to find out exactly what is happening and to document these findings. We have spent only a little time at this effort, but we felt that what we have uncovered so far needs to be told. We hope that others such as social service agencies, teachers, school administrators, governmental officials, social scientists, parents community leaders, and activists who are deploring so loudly, will take the ball and carry it down the field.

We have served as eyes, ears, and scribe. Now let us summarize some of the findings we have already set forth in this booklet. We are also going to make some recommendations based upon our interviews with parents and with the people closely involved in the schools and the community. Some of these ideas were theirs; we thought they were practical ideas, capable of being implemented. We hope they will be given due attention.

THE FAMILY

FINDINGS: The pulse of the Chinese American family in Chinatown is weak. Poverty saps the energy of this social institution that has traditionally nurtured our children. The cause of this poverty springs directly from debts incurred due to the immigration experience, such as air fare, legal fees, and traveling expenses. Add on to that the fact an entirely new household must be set up when the family arrives in New York, and the dent in the pocketbook becomes a big one. Unusual expenses such as key money contributes to the poverty of the new immigrant family. Consequently both parents must work for financial reasons. This gives rise to lack of parental presence. Children are left to fend for themselves. The babysitter is the television set.

Disillusionment also pervades the family. The hoped-for dreamland

is not what the immigrants envisioned. Large families live in cramped, dilapidated housing. There is little privacy or comfort in the homes.

In suburbia, some of the above problems are not as pressing. The rents are higher, but a sizable lump sum is not demanded as key money at the outset. Better housing creates a better home atmosphere. The men also seem to command a higher wage outside of Chinatown.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Since the family itself is undergoing the shock of transplantation, it is weakened in its efforts to provide a healthy home atmosphere for the children. It is not that the parents don't care. They do. Whatever failings they exhibit come more from ignorance, cultural conflicts, and insecurity rather than lack of parental concern. The families, themselves, need help in their transitional stages. Rather than suggest more day-care centers or the like which would separate the parents and children even more, we would like to see the family strengthened. One way is to make it more financially secure. Another is to move out of Chinatown to places where they will not feel totally isolated from their own people, such as the suburban community we observed in this study.

To accomplish this, it is recommended that a housing counseling center be set up to guide new immigrants in their choice of housing and furnishings. The counselors should advise the newcomers to refrain from paying key money and show them how to set up a new household with a minimum of expense. Since a large portion of accumulated debts arise from the expenses related to these two items, that should ease the financial burden of the families somewhat.

The other recourse is to increase income. My book, A Survey of Chinese American Manpower and Employment (Praeger, 1976) dealt extensively with the need to broaden the occupational range of the men who are employed primarily in restaurants and the women who are found in the garment industry. Employment counselors from the State Employment Service should be allocated to work with the new immigrants and help them find employment that will require shorter hours and more adequate pay.

It is believed that the propensity of the Chinese to concentrate in a few occupations is due in large part to lack of knowledge of job opportunities. In other words, these people need re-channeling.

THE SCHOOL

FINDINGS: In our fieldwork, we came to realize that the school is now the most important influence and social institution in the Chinese children's lives. The children spend more time in school interacting with their teachers and peers than they do with their families. For many, it is from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Two out of three daily meals are taken in school. Often the teacher or school personnel are the first to notice that a child needs medical attention. The school not only tries to educate these children, but it must also provide the socialization, the recreation, the supervision, and the feeding of these children as well. It is a tall order to hand the school.

The parents are perfectly willing to entrust their children to the school, and they have great faith in it. However, there are missing links between the school and the parents. In the Chinatown schools, we could sense that the teachers and administrators feel a great emotional attachment to the Chinese children. School personnel are more involved in community functions after school hours. However, the parents are content to let the schools run things without much input. As a result the goals in upbringing sometimes diverge, and cultural conflicts are often bewildering to the children who are taught one thing at home and another at school.

RECOMMENDATIONS: As the schools find themselves in the position of surrogate parents, society should recognize the enlarged role that the chools are playing and provide them with the resources to discharge these extra functions. Obviously, the weakened families need the supportive services of the schools. And the schools are the most accessible institution to reach the children for preventive intervention in warding off any possible adverse influences in their lives.

FINDINGS: The language barrier is the first and most formidable barrier of the Chinese immigrant children at the beginning. It is the school's job to teach them English as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, special language instruction for the Chinese is not a regular part of the school curriculum. Special ESL or bilingual classes have come primarily from special grants from the State or Federal governments. And these have been instituted only recently. In fact, most within the past year. Children who attend school outside of Chinatown get little or no special language instruction. Parents and teachers are not in agreement on bilingual education, but it is too early to make any meaningful evaluation of the curriculum or classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS: An alternative to ESL or bilingual education is to put the new immigrant children in a special non-graded class and give them intensive language training until they are able to function adequately in a regular classroom. Funding for the language classes should be part of the regular school budget.

THE COMMUNITY

FINDINGS: Two Chinese communities were studied, one in Chinatown and one in suburbia. In suburbia, the Chinese generally owned or rented apartments in two-family homes that were fairly substantial. Yet, the people did not lack many of the amenities of a Chinese community such as grocery stores, churches, and the proximity of other Chinese families.

The most noticeable feature of life in Chinatown was the pervasiveness of fear. Young boys are constantly threatened, sometimes by their own kind who want to recruit them into gangs and sometimes by other ethnic groups who pick on them.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The whole crime problem in Chinatown is interwined with population congestion, poor housing, frustration and disillusionment, lack of parental supervision, poverty, lack of recreational facilities and job opportunities for teenagers, and the evil influence of the predatory associations that back the criminal element.[4] The problem must be tackled from all these angles, but the overwhelming fear among the Chinatown residents can be alleviated through changes in the judicial system. Only when it is possible for a person to give evidence and testimony without the threat of drastic retaliation will the people dare to come forward and report the crimes and identify the perpetrators. At present, they have no such concrete assurances. For the police to say, "Come forth and tell us," is not sufficient, if the perpetrators are out on the streets within a short time to exact their revenge.

4. For more comprehensive treatment of this topic see Betty Lee Sung "Gangs in New York's Chinatown", Dept. of Asian Studies, City College New York, 1977.

FINDINGS: The physical environment of Chinatown leaves much to be desired. Over ninety percent of the housing stock in the area was built before 1935, and about half was built before the turn of the century. The tremendous influx into Chinatown has brought about acute congestion and overcrowding.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A construction program to renovate the dilapidated housing in Chinatown is needed. Several times in the past, the City Planning Commission has instituted studies to redevelop Chinatown. The community itself has a Chinatown Advisory Committee that drew up detailed plans and models for redevelopment. So far, nothing has been implemented. Local merchants and those with vested interests fear that urban renewal or construction will disrupt their businesses, but unless some steps are taken soon, Chinatown will be headed for self-destruction.

Since recreational facilities are so lacking in Chinatown, it is recommended that the Chinese children be taken out of the ghetto periodically for trips uptown to visit with other peer groups in churches, YMCAs, camps, and other social settings. The children should be exposed to people and places outside of the community. They should have other role models and experience other activities.

FINDINGS: The social institutions that once served the Chinese are now outmoded and obsolete. Yet new institutions have not risen up to take their place. The organizations that used to tie the community together have lost their following and purpose, and they are too tradition-bound to revitalize themselves, In fact, some of these organizations have turned predators. Yet, the new community groups do not have the broad base community support necessary to provide the strong leadership that is now needed.

The community needs young blood -- people who are conversant in Chinese and English, who are knowledgeable about community politics, who can get factions moving, who are fearless and dedicated, and who can move the Chinese from the past into the present.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Leaders must be trained in the history, and the community interactions of the Chinese in the United States. Asian American courses should accomplish this. The true facts

must be uncovered by research. Government officials, funding agencies and young activists cannot simply dump the old without replacing it with something better. They should recognize that in the Chinese community there are ceremonial leaders and people who are trying to get things done. Differentiate between the two. Accord the elders the traditional "face," but support the doers. To upstage the ceremonial leaders at this point would be to churn up a power struggle, split the community, and keep it from the important tasks at hand. The community cannot afford this kind of conflict.

In our study, our findings, and recommendations, we may have dwelled too much on the pathological. In conclusion, let us say that we found strengths and commendable qualities in the people trying to make the best of a terrible situation. The decision to migrate to the United States was an irreversible one. The newcomers are glad to be here. We heard few complaints from the immigrants themselves. These people were determined to make good by the only way they knew how -- by hard work. Yet, hard work in itself is not enough. To plan, but first to know, is a must.

PUBLICATIONS BY BETTY LEE SUNG

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